



ISSN: 0975-833X

Available online at <http://www.journalcra.com>

International Journal of Current Research
Vol.3, Issue, 5, pp.126-134, May, 2011

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL
OF CURRENT RESEARCH

RESEARCH ARTICLE

HOW ORPHANED PRIMARY SCHOOL PUPILS EXPERIENCE DISENFRANCHISED GRIEF: CASE STUDY OF AKITHI DIVISION, TIGANIA DISTRICT, KENYA

¹John M. Kobia and ²Kaberia A. Kanini

¹Department of Arts and Humanities, Chuka University College, Kenya

²Kilalai Secondary School, Kenya

ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received 4th February, 2011
Received in revised form
5th March, 2011
Accepted 7th April, 2011
Published online 14th May 2011

Key Words:

Disenfranchised grief,
Bereaved child,
Bereavement,
Attachment theory,
Counseling.

ABSTRACT

Children are victims of disenfranchised grief because of their age factor and the circumstances of some deaths (e.g. AIDS related deaths, suicide, criminal offences). The school is the child's second home and thus an important grieving ground for the bereaved child. The school community interacts with the bereaved child, hence it has a role to play in the child's grief process. At the same time, mourning process is necessary for one to cope with bereavement. During the mourning process children have grieving needs. Literature review indicates that children have a special attachment to their parents who are their main attachment figures. In Kenya, the Guidance and Counselling unit in schools is expected to take care of children's grieving needs. Disenfranchised grief is a counselling issue children deal with. This study sought information from the bereaved children in order to establish the nature of disenfranchised grief in Kenya and how orphaned primary school pupils experience it. The study was carried out in Akithi Division, Tigania District, Kenya. Ex-post facto design was used. The study population was primary school children who had lost one or both parents as well as the Teacher Counsellors. Data was collected through questionnaires which included sentence completion and an interview schedule. The data was analysed qualitatively and quantitatively mainly through themes, categories and patterns derived through available theories and other sources. The study found out that there was minimal grief counselling that was going on in schools. The study recommended the introduction of grief education to all stakeholders. This would help maximize the sources of support for the bereaved children while enfranchising the grief already experienced by the orphaned pupils.

© Copy Right, IJCR, 2011 Academic Journals. All rights reserved.

INTRODUCTION

Doka (1989) introduced and defined the concept of disenfranchised grief as the grief that persons experience when they incur a loss that is not or cannot be openly acknowledged, publicly mourned or socially supported. Doka borrowed the term 'disenfranchised' from the root word 'enfranchise'. According to Corr, (in Doka 2002 pg 39-60) to speak of disenfranchisement in relation to bereavement and grief is to recognize that in various spoken and unspoken ways, social and cultural communities may deny recognition, legitimation or support of the grief people experience. Grief on the other hand, is the reaction that a bereaved person goes through in the process of coping with loss. These reactions are both internal and external. Disenfranchising grief hinders the bereaved from expressing the necessary grieving behavior. Children have been cited as belonging to the group of disenfranchised grievers. Rapheal 1983 (cited in Doka 2002) observe that often both the elderly adults and young children are excluded from discussions and rituals concerning the loss. This is in spite of research showing that both groups are capable of grieving. This is especially so when children loss a significant person in

their lives like a parent. Disenfranchised grief resulting from parental deaths will subject the bereaved children to intense unattended grief reactions. According to Bowlby's (1969) attachment theory, the bond between a child and the mother is so strong that a mere separation brings about anxiety on the child. Ideally, parents support their children, both physically and emotionally; they provide a stable home environment in which children can grow and mature; and they serve both as the children's protectors and as their models (Worden, 1996). The attachment theory supports the view that failure to support parentally bereaved children cope with grief may cause disenfranchised grief. This study considers that social support is extremely crucial in order to help bereaved children cope with loss.

In addition, children can be disenfranchised depending on how they grieve. For instance, sometimes adults doubt whether children grieve in the first place. However, simple way of establishing whether children grieve is finding out if they are capable of loving. Children not only love their parents but are also strongly attached to them. Unfortunately, adults often shy away from getting involved with grieving children. In the

*Corresponding author: jkobia2001@yahoo.com

process the way children go through their grief is a possible source of disenfranchisement.

The keyword from Doka's definition of disenfranchised grief that is applied to this study is the lack of social support. The very nature of disenfranchised grief precludes social support (Doka 2002). The attachment figures of the child are becoming fewer as a result of the nuclear family set up. Also, the mortality rate has gone up mainly because of HIV/AIDS pandemic. It is estimated that 60% of 1.8 million orphans in Kenya, have been orphaned by AIDS (*Daily Nation*, February 21, 2006). In Kenya, the child as a pupil forms an important member of the primary school community. The introduction of Free Primary Education (FPE) in Kenya in January 2003 resulted in an increased enrolment of children from 5.9 million in 2002 to 7.2 million in formal public primary schools in 2004 (Republic of Kenya, 2005b). This increase in number implies that the teacher has an increased workload. At the same time, the population of the bereaved children has also increased. The FPE benefited mainly the orphans who could not have gone to school due to lack of money and other necessities. According to Republic of Kenya (2005a) prior to implementation of FPE, many school-age children were kept out of school because among others, many children were orphaned as a result of HIV/AIDS pandemic and other causes and therefore could not afford the school requirements.

The parentally bereaved child needs to go through the mourning process in order to cope with loss. At the same time, mourning is a very necessary requirement in coping with loss resulting from death. The orphan is in constant interaction with the school members. According to Smilansky (1987) the tragedy of a parent's death has inevitable and far-reaching implications for the child since his reality has suddenly changed and he must struggle with intense emotional difficulties. Therefore, the school community as the grieving ground for the bereaved child is the subject of this study. Due to the sensitive nature of death especially with regard to children, it is the feeling of the researchers that the school community has a role to play in helping the orphaned child to cope with parental loss. How do the orphaned pupils experience disenfranchised grief?

Statement of the problem

Although bereavement is inevitable to everybody, it is a challenge to children in a special way. Enfranchising grief is a necessary requirement if children are to cope with parental loss as a contemporary challenge. Disenfranchised grief however, interferes with normal grief reactions because they persist over a long period of time. Children are one class of disenfranchised grievers. Pupils experience various types of losses while they are still members of the school. The school community has an important role to play in socially supporting the bereaved child. However, the members of the school community are part of the larger society, which withdraws such support. This disenfranchisement is a challenge facing the whole world and Kenya in particular. This is because of other sensitive issues surrounding bereavement like AIDS.

In an attempt to address these issues, the Kenya Government developed the School based Teacher Development (SbTD) Guidance and Counseling Material for the Teacher Counselor. However, there is lack of literature to show the effectiveness of

these efforts with reference to disenfranchised grief. This is especially critical when research in other countries of the world has shown that disenfranchised grief needs to be enfranchised in order for the bereaved to cope with the loss. There is also evidence that the bereaved children are a vulnerable population of grievers because of their age factor. Primary school children have to be given psychological support to accept various types of losses they experience in order to achieve their educational objectives. In addition, bereaved children need the social support and counseling provided by the school community. This paper critically analyses how orphaned primary school pupils in Akithi Division, Tigania District, Kenya experience disenfranchised grief.

Objectives of the study

The main objectives of the study are:

- (i) To establish the nature of disenfranchised grief experienced by orphaned primary school pupils in Akithi Division, Tigania District, Kenya.
- (ii) To find out ways in which orphaned children experience disenfranchised grief in primary schools in Akithi Division of Tigania District, Kenya.

Theoretical Framework

This paper is guided by tenets and principles within the attachment theory proposed and developed by John Bowlby. All the studies that Bowlby (1969) uses point out to the fact that there is strong attachment behavior between the infant and the mother. One major indicator of this attachment is that there is a strong need to be close to each other. This is referred to as proximity. Proximity occurs at two levels, with child and mother complementing one another. The mother makes an effort to search for the child when he wanders away from her especially at an early stage. On the other hand, the child uses whatever is at its disposal to seek for the mother especially if alarmed. Attachment behavior is present at age 6 months. At this age, the child begins to show signs of discriminating the mother from the rest by perceptual discrimination. This is the only ability at the baby's disposal. As he grows older he takes up the role of maintaining proximity more than does the mother. Secondly, attachment is developed due to the need for security and safety. Worden (1991) notes that these two develop early in life and are usually directed towards a few specific individuals. At the same time, they tend to endure throughout a large part of the life cycle. In this case attachment is present and necessary in life. Only the attachment figures may be substituted. This need for security and safety is manifested especially when a child is alarmed. When this happens the child quickly withdraws to the mother and only when close to the mother does he venture to find out the source of the alarm.

According to attachment theory death permanently separates the child from the main attachment figure. The attachment is so strong that the separation is a major blow to the child's normal life. Death of a parent means the attachment bonds are permanently disconnected leaving the child to feel insecure and sad. Other common disturbances that find their root in separations are tendency to make excessive demands

on others and being overly anxious when these demands are not met like in dependent and hysterical personalities. There is also inability to get involved in deep relationships like the case in affectionless and psychopathic personalities. The attachment theory is relevant to the current study because it explains why grief is intense when child loses the parent. The attachment theory shows that parental loss should not be underrated. The special tie between the parent and the child means that care needs to be taken in order to help the bereaved child.

Review of Related Literature

This literature review addresses the issue of grief from the early theorists up to the recent developments. The review on the history of grief will draw on the early studies of psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud and the grief process theory. The disenfranchised grief literature focuses on children. Finally, the review looks at the manifestations of disenfranchised grief on the bereaved child and the situation as it is in Kenya.

The History of Grief

Although disenfranchised grief is a relatively new concept, grief is not. Human beings have always grieved the death of their loved ones. Grief studies started with Sigmund Freud. It all started with Breuer, a close associate of Freud. Breuer had been treating a single client who had developed hysterical symptoms. The symptoms got worse after her (client) father's death. Freud got interested in Breuer's therapy of talking cure he (Breuer's) was using on his client. The attachment that exists between people is usually strong because of the role they play to satisfy needs. Secondly, human beings direct energy for emotional purposes. This energy is what Freud calls the libido energy. The individual needs to accept the reality of the loss so that the emotional energy can be released.

The grief field is always evolving. In 1996, a group of researchers and scholars felt the need to challenge the idea of detaching oneself (a view held by the psychoanalysts) from the deceased in order to overcome grief. They proposed the Continuing Bonds theory edited by Klass, Silverman and Nickman which proposes that for grief to be overcome, the bereaved should maintain bonds with the lost attachment figures. This new approach has proved to be therapeutic. For instance Corr, Nabe, Corr (2006) note that some bereaved persons have even reported that they have sensed the continued presence of the deceased in their lives or have from time to time received after-death communications and have taken comfort from those extraordinary or paranormal experiences. The continuing bonds theory use memorization of the deceased as a major therapeutic technique to help the bereaved. Similarly, Worden (1996) advocates that the bereaved children need to relocate the dead person with one's life and find ways to memorize the person. Thornton, Gilleylen and Robertson (1991) carried out research in order to find out the relationship between the intensity of grief and anticipated social support from friends and families for various grief reactions. College students were used to rate traditional deaths (e.g. parents, child, spouses), disenfranchised death losses (e.g. cohabiting partner, Lesbian, pet) and non-death losses (e.g. loss of sight, amputation, failing out of school).

The findings showed that the traditional deaths had the highest ratings of intensity of grief (9.1) and anticipated social support (8.7). Disenfranchised death losses recorded 7.8 and 6.8 respectively whereas non-death losses showed the lowest (7.1 and 6.8 respectively). This showed that the lower the perceived intensity of grief, the lower the anticipated social support. Disenfranchised and non-death losses were both less recognized as inducing a grief process and less likely to receive social support. Studies have also been conducted to establish whether disenfranchisement may come from the bereaved themselves (intrapersonal). Cohen (1997) reported a finding that students reported they were less likely to engage in help seeking behavior when they perceived a lack of recognition of their grief by others. The grievers are likely not to seek help if they perceive that they were not likely to get social support.

Children, Disenfranchised Grief and Bereavement

Bereavement occurs when a person close to us dies. Kastenbaum (1995) views bereavement as an objective fact of losing someone close to us. Bereavement results to change of status, in this case from a child with a parent to an orphan. According to Corr *et al.*, (2006) bereavement has three main elements. There must be a relationship or attachment to a valued person. This study takes this relationship to be parent-child relationship. Secondly, there must be the loss itself resulting from death. Thirdly, the bereaved individual in this case the child. Disenfranchisement takes place when people refuse to acknowledge this change of status of the orphan. It is after bereavement has taken place that other aspects of grief and mourning are introduced. Reactions resulting from grief may not be recognized, legitimated or supported by society (Doka, 2002).

Available literature strongly support that children grieve deeply. One main empirical support for this assumption is the attachment theory proposed by Bowlby. This theory indicates that a mere threat to loss of an attachment figure creates anxiety to the child. Actual loss (e.g. through death) causes great sorrow. Although there is debate on the age at which children are able to grieve, studies generally agree that the older the child grows the better the understanding of death. Nagy 1948 (cited in Kastenbaum 1995) carried out one of the early studies of children's concept of death in 1948. She examined 378 children aged 3 to 10 years through use of their words and pictures. The findings were classified into 3 age-related stages as shown in the table below.

Table 1. Maria Nagy's stages of death comprehension in childhood

STAGE	AGE RANGE	INTERPRETATION OF DEATH
1	3-5	Death is separation. The dead are less alive. Strong curiosity about death.
2	5-9	Death is final-but one might escape it. Death is seen as a person
3	9-adult	Death is personal, universal, final and inevitable.

Source: Nagy 1948/1969 (as cited Kastenbaum 1995: 202)

Thus from the table above, children aged nine and above are able to understand death as irreversible but personal. A study carried out by Smilansky (1987) about Israeli children (aged 4-12) came up with similar findings.

If children are able to understand death, then they are able to grieve. Furman (1974) suggested that children at the age of three years can grieve because they have achieved object constancy. Children who experience loss through death can understand death to be final much earlier than typically suggested. It is clear that children above age six are capable of grieving and should be entitled to the social support accorded by society.

Manifestations of disenfranchised grief on children

Disenfranchised grief resulting from parental deaths will subject the bereaved children to intense unattended grief reactions. Bereaved children are no exceptional to strong feelings. Some of these feelings may be too intense for the child to express. They need help with these overwhelming feelings. The Boston study cited feelings of sadness, anger, anxiety and guilt. These feelings have been associated with sudden/traumatic deaths like murder, suicide, fatal accidents and sudden fatal illness (Goldman 1996). A child may be tempted to blame the parent who commits suicide. The surviving parent may react negatively causing inhibition of such feelings. Children need to be involved and included in both the dying process and in post death activities. For instances, taking care of the dying and funeral ritual are two important avenues of helping to facilitate grief. Worden (1991) outlines ways through which the funeral aids in grief. It helps make real the fact of the loss, gives people an opportunity to express thoughts and feelings about the deceased, is a practical way of showing that the person is gone and that it has the effect of drawing a social support network to the bereaved family. However there is an advice that the children need to decide whether they want to attend funerals or not after relevant information is provided to them.

Other deaths are socially stigmatized. Deaths resulting from AIDS, suicide, and homicide have been cited as stigmatized in Kenya for instance, 70% of deaths are caused by AIDS (Ministry of Health, 1999). Faced by such deaths children choose to remain silent rather than face being ridiculed. They cannot grieve normally because they have not separated the loss of the deceased from the way the deceased died (Goldman 1996). Lazare 1996 (cited in Worden 1991) outlines three social conditions that give rise to complicated grief reactions. They are the loss being socially unspeakable (e.g. suicide) when the loss is socially negated and when there is the absence of social support network. Indeed, this is in full agreement of what disenfranchised grief is all about.

From the literature review, it emerges that although disenfranchised grief is a new phenomenon, grief may not. When a person is bereaved, a certain process begins. The Attachment theory demonstrates that death of a significant other causes a severe vacuum in the life of the bereaved child because of the strong bond between them. At the same time a bereaved person needs to overcome grief in order to cope with bereavement. Unfortunately, studies indicate that children may be victims of disenfranchised or hidden grief. Instead of being accorded the normal social help to grief, they are denied the right to mourn. The review of literature reveals that the already carried out studies have two main limitations. They are not only theoretical but have also used indirect methods of assessment. For instance, the reviewed studies targeted college students as

informants. Doka (2002) observes that there is a pressing need for research that really describes the particular and unique responses to different types of losses. Secondly, the categories described by Doka are guidelines. Doka (2002) admits that the proposed taxonomy draws examples attuned to contemporary western culture and they may differ in other cultures. There is scarcity of grief research in Africa and specifically Kenya. Schools need to create environments that are supportive of grief experienced by members of school communities since the benefits of enfranchising grief have important educational outcomes (Rowling 2003). Literature on specific effects of disenfranchised grief with regard to children is very limited. This study therefore intended to fill these gaps by getting first hand information from a population that may be disenfranchised. This disenfranchisement was studied in the school; a child's second and important grieving ground for the bereaved child. The study intended to fill the gap by finding out the ways in which orphaned children experience disenfranchised. By doing this, the study would contribute to the body of knowledge on grief in children in primary schools and specifically in Akithi Division, Tigania District, Kenya.

Research Design

The research design for this study was the ex post-facto design, that used descriptive survey. Kothari (1985) contends that the main characteristics of the ex post-facto design is that the researcher has no control over the variables. He can only report what has happened or what is happening. In this study, bereavement has already occurred. The effects have been felt or are still being felt.

Location of the study

The study was based in Akithi Division of Tigania District, Kenya. Given the sensitivity of the research problem, the researcher felt that it was best to carry out the research in a familiar locality. Gall, Borg, and Gall (1996) state that carrying out research in a setting where one is known as a friend and colleague makes it easier than if one is regarded as an outsider with unknown motives.

Target Population

The study targeted primary school going children who had lost either or both parents. Akithi Division has an estimate of 700 orphans in the twenty-nine public primary schools (Meru North DEO's Office 2005). Of these, approximately 24% were maternal orphans, 69% paternal orphans and 7% were total orphans. Eleven public primary schools took part in the study. These were schools which had 40 orphans and above. The table below shows these schools, their enrolment and the estimated number of orphans in the schools.

Sampling Techniques and Sample Size

In order to get in-depth information, a small sample was drawn. Purposeful sampling was used to get schools with 40 orphans and above to form the sample of the study. Random sampling was used to get a representative sample of maternal, paternal and double orphans who were above ten years. Table 3 shows the sample sizes per school and their type of bereavement.

Table 2. Number of orphaned pupils in Akithi Division

School	Enrolment Frequency	Enrolment %	Orphans Frequency	Orphan %
Mucuune	607	9.8%	111	17.5%
Kitheo	624	10.1%	93	14.7%
Limoro	761	12.3%	59	9.3%
Kamanoro	426	6.9%	54	8.5%
KK Lumbi	680	11%	50	7.9%
Manthi	425	6.9%	48	7.6%
Mwerokanga	535	8.7%	46	7.2%
Nkurare	583	9.5%	46	7.2%
Mwerondo	604	9.8%	44	6.9%
Maitha	522	8.5%	44	6.9%
Ithatene	402	6.5%	40	6.3%
Total	6169	100%	635	100%

Source: D.E.O's Office, Meru North

Table 3. The sample by schools

School	Type of bereavement						Total	
	Mother		Father		Both			
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Mucuune	3	4.8	4	6.3	1	1.6	8	12.7
Manthi	0	.0	5	7.9	0	.0	5	7.9
Ithatene	1	1.6	4	6.3	0	.0	5	7.9
Maitha	2	3.2	2	3.2	1	1.6	5	7.9
Limoro	0	.0	4	6.3	2	3.2	6	9.5
Kamanoro	0	.0	5	7.9	1	1.6	6	9.5
Kurare	3	4.8	2	3.2	0	.0	5	7.5
Mwerondo	3	4.8	2	3.2	0	.0	5	7.5
Mwerokanga	0	.0	5	7.9	0	.0	5	7.5
K.K.Lumbi	1	1.6	4	6.3	1	1.6	6	9.5
Kitheo	0	.0	6	9.5	1	1.6	7	11.1
Total	13	20.0	43	68.3	7	11.1	63	100

This sample was drawn from the upper primary school children who had lost either or both parents. The children must have been aged between 9-15 years. They had been bereaved within the stated age bracket. The bereavement period did not exceed 2 years. This period is said to be adequate for the bereaved to go through the grief process. Worden (1991) feels that for many, full resolution may take at most two years. A sample of 10% (63 bereaved children) formed the subjects of the study. In addition, purposeful sampling was used to get twelve teachers. These were the Key Resource Teachers (KRTs) in-charge of Guidance and Counseling.

Research Instruments

The main instruments used are:

- The bereaved children's questionnaire
- The teacher's questionnaire
- The teacher's interview schedule

The questionnaire

The questionnaire schedule method was used to get information from the bereaved children. This involved the respondents filling in the questionnaires after a brief interpretation by the researchers. Through observation, the researcher got the opportunity to note down any relevant reactions from the respondents. The questionnaire was used to collect data from the teacher counselors. The bereaved children's questionnaire was used to generate in-depth data from the bereaved children. This is a technique developed by Jewett (adapted from Worden, 1996). Part of the questionnaire contained a sentence completion with the phrase *Its not fair when...* as the guide. It was however modified. For example, children were given freedom to write either in English or Kiswahili. This gave them the freedom to express themselves in a language that they were comfortable in.

The teacher's interview schedule

This method was used to get in-depth information from the Teacher Counselors on how grief is handled in schools. Due to the heterogeneous nature of the occurrence of death and the subsequent bereavement process, the interview was deemed necessary in order to capture the necessary experiences. Thus, the interview used was the general/unstructured interview guide.

Data Collection

First permission was sought from relevant authorities before carrying out the study. Preliminary visits were made to the schools from which the respondents were drawn. Before giving the instruments to the respondents the researchers took time to explain the nature of the study. Particularly for the children, the researchers gave a brief counseling section to the children to prepare them for the items in the instruments. During the actual data filling in procedure, the researchers carefully guided the children subjects in understanding the items in the questionnaire and the sentence completion exercise. Those who had lost both parents were asked to base their responses on one of them and especially the death they could recall best. The teacher counsellor respondents filled in their questionnaires. Finally, they gave their experiences through an interview schedule.

Ethical considerations

The sensitivity of the current study in addition to the age factor of the subjects required that measures be put in place to protect the subjects. Although the subjects were minors, they were required to give their assent through their teachers. To protect the children subjects, random sampling was used to select the participants. Formal consent was still sought from children's caretakers. According to Gall *et al.* (1996), consent with regard to children should be got from the child's care taker who may include appropriate school personnel if the research is carried out in the schools. Consent was got from the head teacher who also facilitated the securing of consent from the parents /caregivers. The interview schedule was preferred as a way of protecting the children. The assumption was that whereas they may have felt uncomfortable talking about these experiences they would write down in their own privacy. The exercise took place through having all the children in a group

in order to help them develop confidence by watching others take part. They were given brief counseling session before giving the instruments to prepare them on the nature of the study.

Data Analysis and Interpretations

Data Analysis

Both quantitative and qualitative data analyses were used. Quantitative data was analyzed by use of percentiles and frequencies. Qualitative data analysis started during data collection. According to Mugenda M.O and Mugenda G.A (1999), qualitative data analysis seeks to make general statements on categories or themes of data that are related. Data was edited, coded, classified and summarized into categories. A guideline from Worden (1996) grieving needs of bereaved children was used to weigh disenfranchisement and Doka's (2002) taxonomy of disenfranchised grief are some of the categories that were used in data analysis. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) package was used to help in descriptive statistics as well as working out the cross tabulations between variables. Grief and especially disenfranchised grief may not be analyzed well using numbers alone but also feelings gotten through in-depth information. The feelings generated are more often than not unique to every individual thus, all the data is relevant regardless of the quantity of the responses.

The Demographic Data of Participants

Two groups of participants in public primary schools in Akithi Division were involved in this study. They are the Key Resource Teachers in Guidance and Counseling and parentally bereaved children aged between 9 -16 years. However, after sampling the age of the children fell between 12-17 years.

The Demographic Data of the Bereaved Children

A total number of Sixty three (63), bereaved children took part in the study. The bereavement period should not have exceeded two years from the dates of data collection. Although random sampling was used to get the respondents, this technique was influenced by the lack of data on the bereaved children in most schools. Table 4 show the demographic data of the bereaved children in frequencies and percentages.

Table 4. Demographic data of pupils

Gender	Freq	Percent
Male	28	44.4
Female	35	56.6
Total	63	100
Age in years		
12- 13	24	38
14- 15	32	50.8
16- 17	7	11.1
Total	63	100
Class		
4- 6	26	41.3
7- 8	37	58.7
Total	63	100
Type of bereavement		
Mother	12	19
Father	44	69.8
Both	7	11.1
Total	63	100

A total of 63 pupil respondents took part in the study whereby 44.4% were boys and 56.6% were girls. The 14-15 age bracket

formed the majority with 50% although respondents who were 13 years formed the majority with 32% compared to 17 years which was just 2% of the total sample. The average age was 14.034 years. The study targeted children in upper primary school classes. After sampling, classes 7-8 had 58.7% but data on specific classes showed that the majority respondents were in class 7 with 23 (37%) of the total sample. Paternal orphans had the highest percentage of 69.8%. Only 11.1% respondents had lost both parents. Data was analyzed to find out the bereavement details of the pupil respondents by gender as shown in Table 5 below.

Table 5. Demographic data by gender

Gender		Age in years			Class		Type of bereavement		
		12-13	14-15	16-17	4-6	7-8	Father	Mother	Both
Male	Freq	11	12	5	14	14	20	6	2
	%	17.5	19	7.9	22.2	22.2	31.7	9.5	3.2
Female	Freq	13	20	2	12	23	24	6	5
	%	20.7	31.7	3.2	19.1	6.5	38.1	9.5	7.9
Total	Freq	24	32	7	26	47	44	12	7
	%	38.2	50.7	11.1	41.3	58.7	69.8	19	11.1

Table 5 contains data on the age, class and the respective parent they had lost by gender. Both the age and the class variables were presented using ranges. The greatest percent (50.7%) of the age fell between ages 14-15 years with 31.7% girls. The highest frequencies per class were 58.7% in class 7-8 although there was a tie of 22.2% for the male respondents in the two grouped classes. On one hand, 38.1% girls had lost their fathers compared to 31.7% boys. In addition, 9.5% females had lost a mother whereas only 3.2% of males and 7.9% females had lost both parents. Majority of the children respondents (69.8%) had lost their fathers. A small number of 25 children respondents knew the cause of their parents' death but 38 did not know. In spite of this, only a small number 14.3% mentioned the cause of the death.

The Teachers' Demographic Data

Table 6 below shows the experience of the teacher counsellors and their gender.

Table 6. Experience of the teacher counsellors

Gender	Experience of the teachers		Total
	1- 4 years	5- above	
Male	25.0%	41.7%	66.7%
Female	16.7%	16.7%	33.3%
Total	41.7%	58.3%	100.0%

Of these respondents, 67% were males and 12% were females. Majority of these teachers (58%) had an experience of 5 years and above. Those with less than five years experience were 42%. All of them were Christians with 42% being Catholics and 58% Protestants. It was noted that only 17% teacher respondents did not come from the location of the study. The study targeted all the KRT in guidance and counseling in all 11 sampled public primary schools in the division since there was only one appointed as the guidance and counseling teacher. Eleven teachers were expected to form the teacher respondents. However, there was a slight deviation. In one of the schools, there were two appointed teacher counselors to take care of gender matters (i.e. a male and a female teacher). The two were involved in the study. In another sampled school the teachers' counselor had just been transferred. The acting teacher counselor became the respondent. Therefore, in total

there were 12 KRT.

Ways in Which Children Experience Disenfranchised Grief

The study sought to find out the ways through which children experienced lack of support. Table 7 shows the reactions the bereaved children exhibited after losing their loved ones.

Table 7. Bereaved children’s reactions

Reactions	Frequency	Percent
After getting news		
Cry	5	41.7
Look affected	7	58.3
Total	12	100
Returning of bereaved children		
Sad	3	25
Withdrawn	8	66.7
Other	1	8.3
Total	12	100

From the table above, bereaved children reacted to the death of their parents both while getting the news as well as when returning to school after the burial of their parents. At both times, 58% and 67% of the teachers respondents said that pupils looked affected as well as being withdrawn respectfully. Other reactions included crying and feeling sad. These reactions are normal and common to many grieving children. Worden (2002) reported that in the HCBS, most children cried on hearing of the death, and two thirds cried again sometime during the initial weeks. Data on the ways bereaved children experience disenfranchised grief was presented using three main variables. These were through analyzing the agents and the mode of news breaking (see Table 8) as well as comparing the support provided to the bereaved children (Table 9).

Table 8. Ways leading to disenfranchised grief

Ways of disenfranchisement	Male		Female		Total	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Agents of news breaking						
Parent	14	22.2	8	12.6	22	34.9
Others	7	11.2	7	11.2	14	22.4
Nobody	7	11.1	20	31.7	27	42.9
Total	28	44.5	35	55.5	63	100
Mode of news breaking						
Factual	7	11.1	11	17.5	18	28.6
Euphemisms	18	28.6	20	31.7	38	60.3
Other	3	4.7	4	6.3	7	11.1
Total	28	44.4	35	55.5	63	100

Information regarding the various agents of information available to the bereaved children showed that soon after their parental loss 42.9% of the respondents had nobody break the news to them. The rest had the news broken by the surviving parent or other people. In the category of other people, the respondents specifically mentioned relatives (4.8%), friends (7.9%) and neighbors (9.5%). Data on the kind of language used showed that 66.6% of the respondents received the news in euphemisms. The common euphemisms that were used included the parents had gone on a long journey or were very sick. There were gender differences in terms of who broke the news. From the male respondents, 22.2% of them had the news about death of their parents broken by the surviving parent compared to 12.7% females. This can be compared to

31.1% girls and 11.1% boys who had nobody break the news to them. Only 31.6% respondents received factual information that their parents had actually died. Another respondent said that she just saw the grave of her father. Social support given to the bereaved children was biased as shown in Table 9 below.

Table 9. Social support

Age	Support of bereaved children				Total	
	Support		No support		Freq	%
	Freq	%	Freq	%		
12	3	5.3	1	1.8	4	7
13	11	19.3	5	8.8	16	28.1
14	10	17.5	6	10.5	16	28.1
15	10	17.5	4	7	14	24.6
16	6	10.5	0	.0	6	10.5
17	1	1.8	0	.0	1	1.8
Total	41	71.9	16	28.1	57	100

Data on the uniformity of the social support available to the respondents was also analyzed. The respondents were asked if they received same support after the death of their parent as other bereaved children. This information was categorized under support for those who received same support and vice versa for those who did not. On this, 71.9% felt that they did not but 28.1% said that they did. There were differences recorded as a result of age because they all showed a higher percentage in biased support as compared to the same. This unfair handling of bereaved children mainly came from neighbors 47% and relatives 24%. From the open ended question, social support was the respondents were victims of harassments such as taking away their property, neighbors killing the respondents’ parents as well as alleging that the children would not complete school. All the teacher respondents put every effort to minimize the feelings of grief with 67% encouraging the children not to think of the

deceased and 33% encouraging them not to worry. In addition, 13% of the respondents were denied the chance to attend the funeral. During the interview the teacher respondents did not point out individual cases they had offered grief counseling to, apart from generally reporting that they attended the burial and made contributions of one kind or another. A female teacher disclosed that even when death of a parent was reported to school before the children went home in the course of the day, an eye was kept on the bereaved children to ensure that they did not get wind of it. The real issue for bereaved children is not so much whether they can grieve but the nature of their grief and mourning (Corr *et al.*, 2006). Disenfranchisement may begin as early as at the news breaking phase. From the above it is clear that the provision of information and the

breaking of news were flawed. The task of accepting the reality is an important first step in coping with grief. Caregivers need to carefully listen to the children in order to help them accept the reality. Grief researchers advocate the use of words like *died* or *dead*. Provision of answers like their parents *have gone on a long journey* or *are very sick* were euphemisms that are not only confusing but also blocks the children from grasping the finality of death. Corr *et al.*, (2006) observes that effective communication avoids euphemisms and inaccurate or inconsistent answers because they so easily lead children into misunderstandings that may be disturbing than the real facts. Children at the age of the sampled respondents understand the main concepts of death. Therefore the use of euphemisms only serve to disenfranchise the grief experienced by the bereaved children. The distancing of the caregivers (KRT) from initially getting involved with the bereaved children was evident. For example, the teachers postponed the breaking of news even when the news got to school before the bereaved child went home. There is no indication that there was any follow up with the surviving parent or significant other. This lapse can easily be unnoticed and by the time the child returns to school the best a teacher can do is to encourage them not to think of the death. Failure to go through the tasks of mourning is evidenced by the kind of responses cited by the bereaved children. The main suggestion revolved around denial since many children said they did not want to discuss their parents' death.

The above findings strongly revealed the presence of bereavement needs of the children. They expressed unhappiness at lacking important things in their lives as a result of the death of their parents. Children generally are very sensitive to discriminative behavior. The difference in support confirmed by many of the respondents indicates that there are no clear cut policies put in place by individual schools when pupils experience loss. The reasons provided for this biased support by the respondents, directly point out the various reasons for experiencing disenfranchised grief. These are gender, economic status and the circumstances of the loss. The findings agreed with Doka (2002) view that ways individual grieve also can contribute to disenfranchisement.

Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations

Findings

The study sought to find out the ways through which parentally bereaved children experience disenfranchised grief in Akithi Division of Tigania District, Kenya. The findings are:

One of the ways through which disenfranchisement is encouraged has to do with information regarding death. There was failure to give information of death right after the death of parents. A group of 42.9% of the children participants had nobody to break the news to them. Information provided regarding the death was distorted and wrong. This kind of information was provided to 60% of the respondents. The importance of a funeral cannot be underrated. Among the benefits is provision of social support to the bereaved, reaffirming their new identity and reincorporating them into the larger community, Doka 1984 (cited in Doka 2002). Unfortunately 5.9% of the children participants were not

offered a chance to attend the funeral. Also, biased treatment will serve to lower the confidence of children who may wish to seek help to cope with their bereavement. Majority of the children (71.9%) felt that the support given to them was different from the other bereaved children.

Finally, offering of grief counseling was another major finding in terms of the ways of disenfranchising grief. According to Worden (1991) one way of facilitating the grief process is to talk about the deceased and the circumstances of the loss. However, the findings revealed that majority (67%) of the teacher counselors encouraged the bereaved children to minimize feelings of grief, and another 33% told them not to worry about the death. A male teacher who had been a teacher counselor for four years said that it was important to have the children settle in school as fast as possible. The school did not wish to have children dwell on the bereavement issue for long. The faster they forgot about the death the better. The danger of this trend by teachers is captured by Kastenbaum (1995) observation that adults who hold that children cannot comprehend death are likely to show a different part of interaction and decision making than those who feel believe that children do grasp the meaning of death.

In summary, ways through which grief matters were handled in school show that the bereaved children were not moving towards coping with the losses they had experienced. The kind of grief counseling the teacher counselors were using did not touch on the specific feelings and emotions associated with grief. This was in spite of these feelings being present. For instance, teachers owned up to the fact that bereaved children felt sad and are withdrawn. In so doing, they blocked children's efforts to acquire information, express their feelings, obtain support and learn to cope with sadness and loss (Corr *et al.*, 2006).

Recommendations

In a bid to enfranchise grief experienced by bereaved children, the study strongly makes the following recommendations.

- i. All the stakeholders in education are sensitized on the importance of going through mourning after losing a loved one. This should not be different for bereaved children.
- ii. The Ministry of Education should in-service teachers on how to handle grief in schools. The G&C materials should be revised to include detailed aspects of grief counseling especially covering the unnoticed grief and unnoticed grievers.
- iii. The Ministry of Education should consider introducing grief education to all the stakeholders in schools; children, parents/significant others, teachers and the administration. Grief education has important outcomes that will go along way in helping all who are affected either directly or indirectly by grief.

Conclusions

Bereaved children experience disenfranchised grief through a number of sources. They include failure to break the news of death to the bereaved children, provision of wrong information, and biased treatment to the bereaved.

Disenfranchisement is further complicated by the occurrences of stigmatized deaths. Children themselves mentioned cases of suicide but the teachers mainly mentioned that AIDS had claimed many of the parents. If there is no grief counseling available for these cases, there is an indication that this grief may be complicated. The teacher counselors were not blind to the fact that parentally bereaved children do indeed grieve. They felt that grieving was necessary outlet and agreed that bereaved children looked withdrawn and affected.

REFERENCES

- Bowlby, J. 1969. *Attachment and loss*. London: The Hogarth Press.
- Cohen, D.A. 1997. An empirical study of college students' grief responses: Death vs. nondeath losses. *Dissertation abstracts international*, 58, 94a.
- Constans, G. 1996. *Just a heartbeat away*. Omaha, NE: Centering Corporation.
- Corr, A.C, Nable, M.C and Corr. M.D 2006. *Death and dying, life and living*. Belmont, CA: Thomson \ And Wadsworth.
- Corr, A. C, 2002. Revisiting the concept of disenfranchised grief. In Doka (ed). *Disenfranchised grief* (pg 39-60). Champaign, IL: Research Press.
- Crenshaw, A. R. 2002. The disenfranchised grief of children. In Doka (ed). *Disenfranchised grief* (pg 293-306). Champaign, IL: Research Press.
- Doka, K. J. (ed.). 2002. *Disenfranchised grief: New directions, strategies and challenges for practice*. Champaign: Research Press.
- Doka, K. J. 1989. *Disenfranchised grief*. Lexington, MA: Lexington Books.
- Doka, K.J. 1998. Disenfranchised grief. In Dickinson, Leming and Mermann (eds). *Dying, death, and bereavement 98/99*(4th ed.). Dushkin/McGraw-Hill.
- Furman, A. 1974. *A child's parent dies*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Gall, D.M, Borg, R.W and Gall, P.J. 1996. *Educational research* (6th ed.). New York: Longman.
- Goldman, L.1996. *Breaking the silence*. London: Taylor and Francis.
- Kastenbaum, R. 1995. *Death, society and human experience* (5th ed.). London: Allyn and Bacon.
- Klass, D., Silverman, P.R & Nickman, S.I (eds). 1996. *Continuing bonds: New understandings of grief*. Washington, D.C: Taylor and Francis.
- Kothari , R. C. 1970. *Research methodology*, (2nd ed.). New Delhi: Willy Eastern Limited.
- Marrone, R. 1997. *Death, mourning and caring*. Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole.
- Mugenda, O .M. and Mugenda, G. A. 1999. *Research methods*. Nairobi: ACTS Press.
- Ndetei, D. 1990. Attachment and bonding in children. *Daily Nation*, 21, September, pg. 22 col 1.
- Ndetei, D 1990. Recent advances in attachment theory. *Daily Nation*, 5, October, pg 22 col 1.
- Republic of Kenya. 2005b. *Sessional paper no.1 of 2005 on policy framework for education ,training and research*. Nairobi.
- Republic of Kenya. 2005a. *Kenya Education Sector Support Programme 2005-2010*. Nairobi.
- Rowling, L. 2003. *Grief in school communities*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Smilansky, S. 1987. *On death*. New York : Peter Lang.
- Spiegel , Y. 1973. *The grief process*. London: SCM Press Ltd.
- Thorton, G., Robertson, D. U., and Mlecko, M.L. 1991. Disenfranchised grief and evaluations of social support by college students. *Death studies*, 15, 355-362.
- Thorton, G. and Zanich.L.M. 2002. Empirical assessment of disenfranchised grief: 1989-2000 In Doka.(ed). *Disenfranchised Grief* (pg, 79-89). Champaign: Research Press.
- Wolfelt, A. 1983. *Helping children cope with grief*. Muncie, IN: Accelerated Development.
- Worden, J. 1996. *Children and grief*. New York: The Guilford Press.
- Worden, J. 1991. *Grief counseling and grief therapy* (2nd ed.). New York: Springer.
